

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY (CIVIL WORKS)**

**COMPLETE STATEMENT
OF**

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ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY (CIVIL WORKS)**

BEFORE THE

**Subcommittee on Energy and Water Appropriations
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

Introduction

I am John Paul Woodley, Jr., Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works. Lieutenant General Carl Strock, Chief of Engineers and I are here to discuss the Corps of Engineers relief and recovery efforts in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

Background

The Corps of Engineers responds to natural disasters under the direction of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, is engaged in disaster response as part of its own flood and storm damage reduction and commercial navigation mission responsibilities, and acts in support of military missions as part of the Department of Defense. The Corps plays a major role in rescue efforts, provides water and shelter, and is setting the stage for recovery through its mission for debris removal and restoration of critical infrastructure and navigation. This work is done largely by civilians. There are 34,000 people in the Corps of Engineers including both the civil works and military programs, but only about 600 of them soldiers like Lieutenant General Strock. When we talk about the Corps of Engineers on the ground in the disaster area, it is the Corps' civilian public servants that come from all over the country to respond. I am proud of the more than 2,900 employees that the Corps currently has deployed in the areas affected by Hurricane Katrina and those who are responding to Hurricane Rita. These good people are responsible for determining requirements and for engaging and supervising private contractors to carry out the work. The Corps' working relationship with local authorities, private citizens and contractors, as well as with other federal agencies is a very significant part of its mission.

The Corps on the Ground Today

I visited the Hurricane Katrina disaster area on September 16 and 17, prior to Hurricane Rita. I am proud to report the fine work being accomplished by Corps of Engineer personnel and other dedicated professionals throughout the region. The Coast Guard's Vice Admiral Thad Allen, the Principle Federal Official, confirmed that Task Force Hope, the Corps of Engineers group, is an important part of the federal response team.

I also conferred with Chuck Brown, Assistant Secretary of Louisiana's Office of Environmental Service about their success working with the Corps

When I flew over both the city of New Orleans and the Gulf coast to Biloxi on Saturday, the devastation was immense. But, I saw a recovery process already well on its way: temporary roads built to enable access to critical work sites, the breaches in the 17th Street Canal and the London Street Canal closed and the majority of the city un-watered.

In Gulfport, Mississippi, I met with the State Adjutant General – Major General Harold Cross who reported the seamless integration of the Corps of Engineers into the disaster response support to Mississippi

The New Orleans District is in the process of reconstituting its organization. These brave men and women are temporarily working at various locations between their headquarters building in New Orleans and the Engineer District headquarters in Vicksburg as they support the relief effort even after many of them have suffered the loss of homes and valued possessions.

After my visit I am assured that the Corps is successfully postured to continue its support to both FEMA and the Department of Defense in their response to the disaster as well as continue with our ongoing civil works mission throughout the nation.

Corps Disaster Relief and Recovery Efforts

The Corps' current efforts from FEMA (for Katrina) will cost about \$3 billion. The Corps has transferred \$64 million from other Corps accounts to the Flood Control and Coastal Emergencies program since Hurricane Katrina and has also received \$200 million in supplemental appropriations for this program. There is also an additional \$200 million in supplemental appropriations for the operation and maintenance program, which will fund repairs to water resources projects owned and operated by the Corps that were damaged by Hurricane Katrina, both flood and storm damage reduction projects and Federal commercial navigation harbors and channels.

Lieutenant General Strock will provide more specifics on the results of their efforts.

The Corps' Future Role in the Disaster Area

While the Corps is focused on disaster relief and recovery, including un-watering New Orleans and surrounding areas, the Administration stands ready to work with local and state officials as they plan for the future of New Orleans and the rest of the Gulf Coast. As we know, New Orleans has a particular challenge because much of the city lies below sea level. The Corps of Engineers will work with the State, city, and parish officials to design and build a flood and storm damage reduction system that is better than before the storm; and these local officials will have a large part in the engineering decisions to come.

The Corps has completed a reconnaissance study that assesses the general engineering feasibility, the economic justification, and the potential environmental implications of providing additional flood and storm protection to New Orleans and the surrounding area. More analysis is required to evaluate a range of options and determine the best way to reduce the risk of future flood and storm damages, and I am looking to the Corps, local officials, and all interested persons to advance these investigations as expeditiously and cost-effectively as possible.

We are especially mindful that the coastal wetlands ecosystem can provide a buffer against the impacts of some storms and thus serves as the foundation upon which projects to reduce the risk of storm damage to the urban areas of the Louisiana coast are constructed. The Administration is working with Congress and the State of Louisiana to develop an appropriate, generic authorization for the Louisiana Coastal Area Ecosystem Protection and Restoration Program that will expedite the approval process for projects and their implementation while providing greater flexibility in setting future priorities and increased opportunities for application of adaptive management decision making.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. I look forward to working with you on matters of mutual interest and concern. Following Lieutenant General Strock's statement, I would be pleased to answer any questions you or the other Subcommittee members may have.